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Studying Buddhist Sculptures in Context (III)

The Case of the Stair riser relief panels from the Buddhist Site of Aziz Dheri, Gandhāra-Pakistan

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Abstract:

Aziz Dheri, which is regarded one of the most important ancient Buddhist sites in the region, is located in the Peshawar valley - the primary Gandhāra. More than four-hundred sculptures have, so far, been recovered from this site during excavations, the investigations which continue since 1993. However, complete reports on most of these endeavors are still awaited.¹ The finding of sculptures from Aziz Dheri are important discoveries and would add more to our knowledge about the Buddhist iconography and the Buddhist art of Gandhāra since a good number of them were found in stratified deposits. Moreover, some of these are unique in nature but, unfortunately, their contextual analysis is still lacking. The present study is, therefore, focused on the subject, particularly on the historical context of the stair riser relief panels discovered at Aziz Dheri in 1993.

Keywords:

Aziz Dheri, Stair risers, Gandhara Art, Buddhist iconography, Gandhāra

The numerous sculptures recovered during excavations at the different Buddhist sites in Gandhāra, or those came through other sources, represent different subject matters, particularly themes from the life of the Buddha. Those sculptures which were found in situ were mainly recovered from stūpas where they were fixed to the plinth, drum or other parts of such structures. But, there are only few instances where they are also reported added to the steps of a stūpa such as those recovered from the steps of the main stūpa at Aziz Dheri unearthed during excavation in 1993.

Aziz Dheri is situated in the Peshawar valley, ancient Gandhāra (fig. 1). Although the site was discovered in 1976 (Nasim Khan 2010a: 19), the first excavation at the site was carried out by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of KP, in 1993. Since then, investigations of the site continues but, due to its thick deposit, very little has, so far, been exposed. Moreover, despite several excavations at the site, one could not yet probed into the virgin soil. As a result, there still remain certain questions to answer such as about chronology of the site, its nature and external landscape.

During these previous excavations, thousands of antiquities have been recorded and multiple structures were exposed including the seven stūpas of the site, each one with different form and size. Except stūpa No. 7, the rest of them (Nos. 1-6) are located on the

¹. Preliminary report of the excavation in 2011 is published in 2016 (Nasim Khan 2016a).

eastern side of the site (fig. 2) and are built almost in the same alignment. As far as stūpa No. 7, exposed in 2011, is concerned, it was a small isolated structure built inside a house which is located to the west of the datum point fixed at the highest point of the mound. The first five stūpas (Nos. 1–5) were exposed during excavations in 1993 while No. 6 was unearthed in 2013.

Amongst other antiquities recovered from Aziz Dheri, more than four-hundred sculptures are also part of this large collection. Though these sculptures were mostly found in stratified deposits, only a meagre number of them were discovered in their original positions or were fixed to certain parts of the stūpas. The rest were found hither and thither but, generally in close vicinity of the stūpas. Majority of the sculptures were documented before and during excavation in 2011² and are published by different researchers in different contexts (e.g. Khan 2002; Zain ul Wahab 2010; Nasim Khan 2008, 2010c, 2016a, 2016b) while those recorded in 2013 are published by Mr. Mughal in 2016 (Mughal 2016). Few other research articles are also available on the excavation or other themes related to Aziz Dheri (see Khan, G.R. 2008 and Qazi 1993).

Besides other themes, such as exact chronology of the site, layout of the structures and distribution of the relics, detailed contextual study of the sculptures is also lacking. The first three of these are somehow examined by the author (Nasim Khan 2010a, b, c) besides the problem of some odd iconography and other anomaly observed at Aziz Dheri (Nasim Khan 2016b). The present study, therefore, focuses on a group of sculptures - the stair riser relief panels, which were recovered from Stūpa 1 of the site. Before discussing these panels, it would not be out of place to re-examine Stūpa 1 to better understand the relation between the different phases of construction of the stūpa and the stair riser relief panels.

This stūpa, which is considered to be the main stūpa, is a simple structure consisted of a high square base/plinth (c. 6.45x6.45m) with mouldings below (height 0.1m) and a cornice on its top. It is topped by another low and a reduced square structure³ which supports the drum or the dome (dia. 3m) with mouldings of c. 0.15m height.

Traces of brackets were found just below the cornice of the base of the stūpa. Above the base and on each of its corner evidence of square structures were also noticed. These structures were probably bases of the pillars; if it was the case, it would suggest that the stūpa was either covered or each individual pillar was probably topped with a lion capital. No sign of any kind that could indicate the presence of sculptures fixed to the base of the stūpa was observed. However, stucco sculptures were added to the dome which were placed just above and at the junction of the base and the dome or drum.

The stūpa is built of a diaper masonry from large blocks with small chips fixed in between the large size blocks of white marble, a locally available material. The whole structure is coated with lime plaster, particularly the base. A horizontal line in the plaster of the base, which goes around and in the middle of the plinth, may indicate that the work was completed at least in two different phases. The two superimposed *pradakṣinapatha* are also coated with lime pilaster in the same manner as the plinth of the stūpa (see below). Similar to its base, the upper *pradakṣinapatha* of the stūpa also shows two different phases of

² However, the sculptures recorded in 2011 are to be published in the coming volume (Vol. IV) of Aziz Dheri to be edited by the present author.

³ With recent conservation work of the stūpa, the platform (?) is unfortunately lost and the top structure is shown with more height than the original one (see fig. 3).

applications of the lime plaster (see Nasim Khan 2010a: 98). The stūpa was probably decorated with red paint as to be judged from the traces of red ochre applied to the mouldings, particularly those of the base (see also Qazi 1993).

No relic casket is reported from the stūpa, however, from the center and its floor level two monolithic pillars or stones (each one is about 1.5m) were recovered. They were arranged in crossed position probably pointing the four cardinal points. The two small square structures to the north of the steps, probably votive stūpas (??), may be a later addition. The flight of steps is added to the west side of the stūpa and is formed on eleven steps (fig. 4) where the first one is longer than the rest. The preserved foot slabs of the steps or treads show that all were probably made of schist stone. Stair riser relief panels were recovered from the first three (fig. 5) and the last three steps (figs. 4, 6, 7) while risers of the rest of the steps are shown plastered with decoration of carved floral designs (fig. 4). Why relief panels were not added to the rest of the risers, a diagnostic study of the stūpa through its further excavation, adjacent and underneath the stūpa, was conducted by the author in 2007/2008 with a hope to find answers to some of the intricate questions.

Further excavation at the stūpa area has, therefore, revealed that, first, the stūpa shows two superimposed *pradakṣinapatha*. The lower one, which probably predates the upper one, is about square in shape (c. 6x6m) and is constructed on four sides of the stūpa and goes underneath the steps of the stūpa as well as the two small structures built to the left side of the steps. Compare to the lower *pradakṣinapatha*, the upper one is extended further to the west and passes in front of the steps of the stūpa.

Secondly, traces of wall like structure, constructed parallels and interior to the walls of the present plinth of the stūpa and around the dome, were observed the purpose of which is not yet clear. One of the possibilities would be that the stūpa has seen two phases of construction. The questioned walls probably belong to the early phase of construction and may indicate walls of the first plinth of the stūpa. The stūpa was probably enlarged in a later period by adding about 0.5m another thick layer of construction in all four directions.

Third, during investigation of the stūpa two copper coins were also recovered below the foundation of the stūpa and its lower *pradakṣinapatha*. These coins, which may predates the construction of the stūpa, belong to the Indo Greek ruler “Appollodotus II” and the Indo-Scythian ruler “Azes II” (Nasim Khan 2010a 96, 124; Nasim Khan 2010b: 3, 19). Late period Kushan coins and inscribed potsherds were recovered from inside the sacred structures constructed nearby to the main stūpa.

The diagnostic studies of the stūpa has, therefore, shown that the construction of this structure does not belong to the same period but the original structure was probably enlarged in a later period; this is also supported by the presence of two superimposed *pradakṣinapatha* provided to the stūpa. More probably, the early structure of the stūpa, to which may include the first *pradakṣinapatha*, was constructed during the early Kushan period while the enlargement work was made during the late Kushan period and is contemporary to other stūpas of the site some of which are dated, on the basis of numismatic evidence, to the late Kushan or Kushano-Sasanian period. The stūpa was most probably abandoned during the post Kushan period.

Besides stucco figures of seated Buddha, which were found against the wall of the drum of the stūpa, stair riser relief panels in stone were also found in situ. The total number of these panels is 18 but the original number may be more than the given figure. The exact location of

all of them are not explained by the excavator of the stūpa and it is only from some of the photographs of the sculptures taken in situ that help to suggest their original positions. As mentioned earlier, the total number of the steps is 11 while a photograph shows (fig. 4) that only 6 of the risers were added with relief panels.

Discussion and conclusion:

The large number of Buddhist sites explored in the region of Gandhāra are mostly found damaged either due to human vandalism or ravaged because of climatic change which had been occurring through the centuries. Despite the fact that most of these sites are looted or damaged, a good number of them were still found somehow preserved. But, due to careless maneuvering or diggings of many Buddhist sites such as Badalpur, Taxila, contextual details for most of the objects and their stratigraphic information are missing. Here, emphases are mainly made on catalogues of the antiquities, particularly sculptures, without giving their contextual details (see also Nasim Khan 2018). This is one of the reasons that majority of the Gandhāran Buddhist sculptures, preserved in the different museums all over the world, are published not only without their appropriate details, except iconographic analysis, but in most cases we even do not know about their exact provenance. Same is the case with the stair riser relief panels from Aziz Dheri. The very few known Buddhist sites in the region where such panels were observed are the sites of Jamal Garhi, Andan Dheri and Aziz Dheri. The total number of stair riser relief panels recovered from Jamal Garhi is 36 which are preserved in the British Museum, UK. A single example was noticed at Andan Dheri Buddhist site while 18 panels were found in situ at Aziz Dheri site.

The Jamal Garhi panels were fixed to the flight of sixteen steps to the main stūpa (Zwalf 1996: 359, 360) while the single example of the stair riser relief panel from Andan Dheri was discovered in 1966 (Dani 1969: 57, no. 19) and was added to the step of “votive stūpa 10”. Beside these examples, of which the exact provenance is known, there are some other which are told found in Gandhāra but without mentioning their exact locations. Amongst these, two were supposedly recovered from a site in Swat and one is published without mentioning its provenance. They are published by Ackermann (Ackermann 1975: Plates: 172–175, LXXXVIIa, LXXXIXa, LXXXIXb) which, according to him, may be “step — riser” reliefs. These panels were registered by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1939 and 1949. Some are preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and are claimed came from the Swat Valley. According to Behrendt, “The Metropolitan’s reliefs are part of a set of fifteen stair risers and at least six triangular elements probably from a site near the western end of the Swat Valley.” (Behrendt 2007: 27).

But, the most recent discovery of stair riser relief panels with a known provenance is made at the Buddhist site of Aziz Dheri. Though these panels are well documented, their contextual study is a bit tricky and this is because of the overall scenario at the site which is very much complex. As discussed earlier, this is mainly due to several phases of occupations of the site which has not yet been fully exposed. The site extends over on a large area and it is difficult to scientifically excavate the whole site in few years of diggings. Moreover, the very thick deposit of more than sixteen meters also renders the task difficult to complete early enough. Furthermore, the overlapping of structures due to different occupational levels also impede completion of this project earlier. Besides these facts, research investigations is carried out by different teams without having any mutual coordination which has also

resulted this issue more confused and complicated. Sadly, this situation also creates enough space for clandestine activities due to which the landscape and chronology of the site became much difficult to understand.

The diagnostic study carried out at the site in 2007/2008 has made it, however, clear that the early phase of occupation of the site goes back at least to the Indo-Scythian period. While the early presence of the Buddhist activities at the site may belong to the early Kushan period to which the main stūpa may originally belong. The study has also shown that initially the stūpa was probably a small structure which was probably enlarged during the late Kushan period. The limited number of the stair riser relief panels compare to the number of steps would also suggest that they are probably reused materials and may belong to the first phase of construction of the stūpa. It is possible that initially the stūpa had six steps, each one added with stair riser relief panels, but after its possible enlargement the number of the steps increased and the available relief panels were re-used and re-distributed amongst the six risers (fig. 8) while the rest were coated with lime plasters and were carved with floral designs traces of which are still visible. It is also possible that these stair riser relief panels belonged to certain other stūpa in the area but were reused at Azi Dheri during the late Kushan period.

Iconographic study of the panels is equally important. Their most significant aspects are the Jātaka stories and the worship of relics of the Buddha; the latter is, to my knowledge, a unique example and has never appeared before in such a context. Explaining Jamal Garhi panels, according to Behrendt, the absence of panels with devotional elements may be because, “At Jamal Garhi, for example, a set of sixteen stair risers was found leading up to the main stūpa court. That this sculpture was placed in a polluted context-where devotees, presumably barefoot, would have walked-perhaps explains why the panels were carved with non-devotional subject matter” (Behrendt 2007: 27). The combination of devotional and secular themes in the stair riser relief panels from Aziz Dheri turns the Buddhist iconography in Gandhāra, therefore, more interesting. As already observed (Nasim Khan 2016; Nasim Khan and Durrani 2010), the Buddhist sculptures from Aziz Dheri show certain unique or rare iconographic elements that add more to our knowledge about the religious environment and Buddhist practices in Gandhāra. Such iconographic elements are further examples that distinguish Aziz Dheri from other Buddhist sites in Gandhāra.

Catalogue of stair riser relief panels from Aziz Dheri

Stair riser 1.1 (fig. 9) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No.11)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 113; Serial No. 113)

Size: 27.5 x 19.5cm

Material: Schist

Merry making scene

The panel shows two couples of musicians in gestures of amusement. The female figure in the right field is a drummer while the bearded man, standing in her front and probably wears a poncho, is shown dancing on the tip of his right bared foot and heel of the left. His arms are extended towards the drum in an act of applause. The figure standing behind him is a female harpist who stands in a flexed position. She is playing the harp with her right hand while with her left she holds the instrument. The bearded man to her right is in the gesture of clapping. He stands on his left leg while the other one is raised.

Stair riser 1.2 (fig. 9) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No.6)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 112; Serial No. 125)

Size: 21 x 20.5 cm

Material: Schist

Merry making scene (?)

The panel demonstrates three defaced figures. The female figure in the right field is standing front but her head is shown turned to the right. With her right hand she is holding an unclear object while the other one is in akimbo. She has prominent breasts and her upper body is nude; she wears only a scarf behind the shoulders. A framed figure in the centre, a *yakṣī*, is standing with crossed legs forcing on the tip of her right heel. Her body is twisted to front but the head is turned to the left. With her left hand she grasps the branches depicted over her head while the right one stays on her right hip. She stands on a pot with an averted rim which is placed on a stepped pedestal.

A male figure is standing in the left field and is holding an unclear object under his left arm. The object could be a musical instrument or something similar to a writing board. His upper body is nude.

Stair riser 1.3 (fig. 9) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No.5)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 110; Serial No. 116)

Size: 38 x 19 cm

Material: Schist

Relics worship

Further to the left, the panel shows the scene of relics worship by two figures in *añjali mudrā*. The one to the right is a bejeweled figure with a halo behind his head. While the other one is standing to the right of the relics and seems without a halo. Three other figures are also shown in the same panel. The one behind the man with a halo is playing a flute while the one standing behind the other worshiper is beating a *dhol*, a double-sided drum. To his right stands a female or a courtesan, probably in *añjali mudrā*; she could also be with a gesture of clapping. The most interesting in this panel is the cylindrical shaped reliquary, with a prominent lid having a pointed knob, which is placed on a well prepared seat under a canopy decorated with garlands.

Stair riser 1.4 (fig. 9) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No.4)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 111; Serial No. 114)

Size: 37 x 19 cm

Material: Schist

Merry making scene

This panel portrays five figures. In the right side is a framed figure who is standing on a pot and grasps the branches of a trees with her right hand while the left one is in akimbo. The figure standing to the right is shown with flexed right leg. The right hand is extended forward, may be receiving something from the person standing to his right. He is bare footed. The next standing figure probably

offers something to the one standing in his front. Both her legs are shown flexed in a gesture of reverence. In the left field a couple is depicted in distraction; the woman to the right is shown in full dancing motion. She is standing to front with crossed legs. Her right hand is placed behind in a gesture of slapping her right hip while the right one is raised at her head level with her fingers pointed towards the head. The man to her right is standing front and is carrying a musical instrument - probably of four strings, similar to a violin, under his left arm. In his right hand he is holding a bi-conical like object⁴; he may be in the gesture of playing the musical instrument, it could also be a harp.

Stair riser 1.5 (fig. 9) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No.7)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 115; Serial No. 138)

Size: 7.8 x 20.6 cm

Material: Schist

A framed female figure is standing with crossed legs. She grasps the leafy branches over her head with her right hand while the other one is in akimbo. She is wearing a collar, a necklace and is also bedecked with anklets. The only upper garment is the scarf which is carried in a narrow mode behind her head. The *paridhāna* hangs at her knees level. The panel shows two tenons which were used for fixing it to the stair riser.

Stair riser 1.6 (fig. 9) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No. 3)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 122; Serial No.1)

Size: 36 x 19 cm

Material: Schist

Merry making scene

This rectangular panel represents five different figures which are partially damaged and defaced. The group of figures consists of probably two couples executed in the main field and a framed female figure in the left side of the panel. Among the couples, the females are shown in between the two men who are standing front, one on each side. The man on the right is with his raised right hand while his left hand is turned towards his belly and is most probably holding the gathered folds of his garment. He is standing in a relaxed posture with the load of his body is on his straight left leg while the other one is slightly stretched to the left. The hands of the woman standing to his right are joined together in clapping or pleading like gesture.

The other female figure to the left is in dancing position shown with crossed legs, her feet moving to the right. She is shown with raised arms; her right one is folded towards her shoulder with a pointed index behind the head while the left arm is extended to the right probably with split fingers. The male drummer to the left is shown with a muscular body. The panel shows two tenons on its lower end; the top of the panel is probably missing.

Stair riser 1.7 (fig. 9) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No. 14)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 -?; Serial No. 7)

Size: 36 x 20 cm

Material: Schist

A seriously damaged rectangular panel; only two figures are partially preserved but they are without sufficient details. At the right end is a framed figure who is standing on a pot with probably averted rim. The second figure is only recognizable through his legs who seems to be a man standing front.

⁴ It is possible that both these objects are musical instruments. The one under his armpit might be an early form of "Sain Zahoor" which could be played with one's left hand while the other one may be a "Dugdugi or Damaru" which is generally played with one's right hand. In case of "Dugdugi", a threaded dangling bead should be attached to the instrument for beating both side of the instrument while spinning or turning the instrument. The other possibility would be that the small instrument in his right hand is a "Shahbaz" which is used in playing "rebab", a musical instrument.

The panel shows tenons, two on each of its horizontal ends.

Stair riser 1.8 (fig. 9) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No. 12)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 – 114; Serial No. 112)

Size: 25.5 x 20cm

Material: Schist

Merry making scene

This panel, part of which is missing, is depicted with figures probably representing two couples. The man at the right end of the panel is holding probably an instrument of music close to his chest. His body is slightly inclined towards the woman to his right who is standing crossed legs. Both her hands are shown close to the chest. She is either holding something in her hands or they are joined to clap. The couple in the left field is shown in love. The man to her right is standing front but his upper body is twisted towards the woman who stands to his right. He drags her with his right hand which goes behind her back and probably rests on her right shoulder while with his left hand he grasps her left breast. The right hand of the woman hangs down while her left arm lies on the shoulders of the man to whom she looks avidly. Traces of tenons are available on the upper end of the panel.

Stair riser 1.9 (fig. 9) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No. 13)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 161 (?); Serial No. 3)

Size: 128 x 20 cm

Material: Schist

This is once again a damaged and defaced panel and is depicted with four figures. The framed figure to the right probably stands on a pot with averted rim. The other one to the left side is most probably a lady who is standing crossed legs and is wearing heavy anklets. She seems facing towards the man who is standing to her right or in her front; only the lower legs of the figure to the left are preserved. The man to the extreme left is standing front.

Stair riser 2.1 (fig. 10) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No.8)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 -124A; Serial No. 11)

Size: 72.6 x 18.5 cm

Material: Schist

Jātaka (?) or merry making scene

This is a long rectangular panel and is defaced and damaged on its left side. The frame in the right field displays two confronted and undulating dragons or other creatures. To the left, there is a drinking and dancing scene. In the right field, the upper body of the man is damaged but the fold in his left arm shows that he is probably holding a flywhisk over a bearded and muscular seated figure who is leaning on a pillow or a bag of skin. The seated man seems forcing or pushing something to the jug like object⁵ that is grasped through its handle by the kneeling figure. His right hand probably touches the bottom of the jug while with his left he is trying to push a long round object in to the bottle. The kneeling figure, which is nude, is holding the bottle with both his hands. It is also possible that the kneeling figure pours wine into the glass that the seated man is holding with his left hand. A dancing nude man with his raised right leg and extended hands with clapping position is standing in front of the man with a drum. The other figures in the left field of the panel are indistinct.

Several figures are shown in the lower register. The panel shows tenons at its lower end.

Stair riser 2.2 (fig. 10) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No.9)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 124C; Serial No. 5)

Size: 47.2 x 17 cm

⁵. The vase is of the same type as the one recovered from the early Kushan level of the mound and from area BCV-9/3 (see Nasim Khan 2010b: Cat. No. 11.i.11).

Material: Schist

Return of Māyā to Kapilavastu or may be some unknown Jātaka

Most part of the panel is defaced. It probably represents a narrative from Buddha's life. The two men seem pull a chariot or a cart the scene which most probably depicts the return of Māyā to Kapilavastu; the panel could also represent an unknown or Maitryakanyaka Jātaka. Here a man with long astride is pulling or stopping the loaded wheeled chariot. The lower register shows the same type of carvings as seen in fig. 10: 2.1.

Stair riser 2.3 (fig. 10) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No. 10)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 124B; Serial No. 9)

Size: 51.2 x 17.8 cm

Material: Schist

Probably a Jātaka (??)

The panel shows two compartments, separated by a pilaster, and represents two different scenes. In the right field, there is a water pot and a human figure as well as an indistinct carving probably of an animal that seems drinking water from the pot. The human figure in the left side might be of a woman who is shown with anklets.

In the left compartment are carved two confronted undulating dragons; same type of representation is already explained above (see 2.1). In the lower register probably six human figures supporting the upper register as in the previous examples (see 2.1 and 2.2).

Stair riser 3.1 (fig. 11) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No. 18)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 125A; Serial No. 4)

Size: 48 x 17.2 cm

Material: Schist

Śyāma Jātaka

In the right part of the panel is shown a framed standing female figure who emerges from behind a tree (see also 3.2.). Another figure most probably stands in the left lower corner of the frame. Major part of the panel is occupied by the story of Śyāma Jātaka. Here, in the right and under a hut the blind couple is seated on high seats. In front of the couple, the prince is standing and is in conversation with the blind man. A soldier or guardian is standing in the left end of the panel.

Stair riser 3.2 (fig. 11) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No. 19)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 125B; Serial No. 12)

Size: 75.2 x 17. 5 cm

Material: Schist

Śyāma Jātaka

Though most of the figures in this panel are defaced, it may equally represent the story of Śyāma Jātaka. In the extreme right part of the panel, a woman is seated on a stool trying to lift up the person lying on the ground while a bearded man lamenting the dead body. A flying figure above the head of the old man is holding a pot in his left hand. Behind the bearded man, another one points with his arrow a figure who is lying in his front. Further to the left, a kneeling man is trying to console or lift up the body lying on the ground. Furthermore to the left, a man is seated in *lalitāsana* pose inside a hut. There is an indistinct figure under a hut. On the back side of this hut, a figure is standing with legs wide apart. In the extreme left side of the panel, a framed foliated drawing as we have in 3.1.

Stair riser 3.3 (fig. 11) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No. 20)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 50; Serial No. 115)

Size: 38.5 x 18.6cm

Material: Schist

Jātaka (?) or drinking scene

It is depicted with two framed figures, one on each side of the panel, and a drinking scene in the mid

field. In the central field, a bearded person is leaning on a pillow while a young man in his front is serving him with a drink. While another bearded man is carrying two leather bags of wine on his shoulders. The whole event happens under the leafy branches of trees. The panel is added with tenons.

Stair riser 8 (fig. 12) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No. 15)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 126; Serial No. 15)

Size: 25 x 17cm

Material: Schist

Jātaka (?)

Most of the figures in the panel are worn out or defaced and are recognizable with difficulty. The panel shows two themes. In the extreme right, a man standing in front leaning on a tree under which a deer is standing in front of a hut where an old ascetic is sitting inside. In the left side compartment, there is a merry making scene.

Stair riser 9 (fig. 13) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No. 16)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - 123; Serial No. 17)

Size: 61.2 x 17cm

Material: Schist

Garland bearers

A relief panel with tenons is carved with a garland carried by four *amorini*. In the left side is a framed foliated drawing as we have seen in 3.1 and 3.2.

Stair riser 10 (fig. 14) (Ref. Nasim Khan 2010c: Cat. No. 17)

(Reg. No. PM - AZD 1993 - ?; Serial No. 13)

Size: 27.5 x 17.5cm

Material: Schist

Jātaka; could be Kapilavastu or Rajgir

The figures in the left side of the panel are defaced while those in the right field are somehow recognizable. In the extreme right, a woman is sitting in a balcony while to the left, a framed human figure is seated in a western style. Further to the left, three human figures are shown coming out through the door to the right and moving to the left. The scene may represent the story of the blind men. The panel shows tenons.

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Fig. 1. Location map of Aziz Dheri

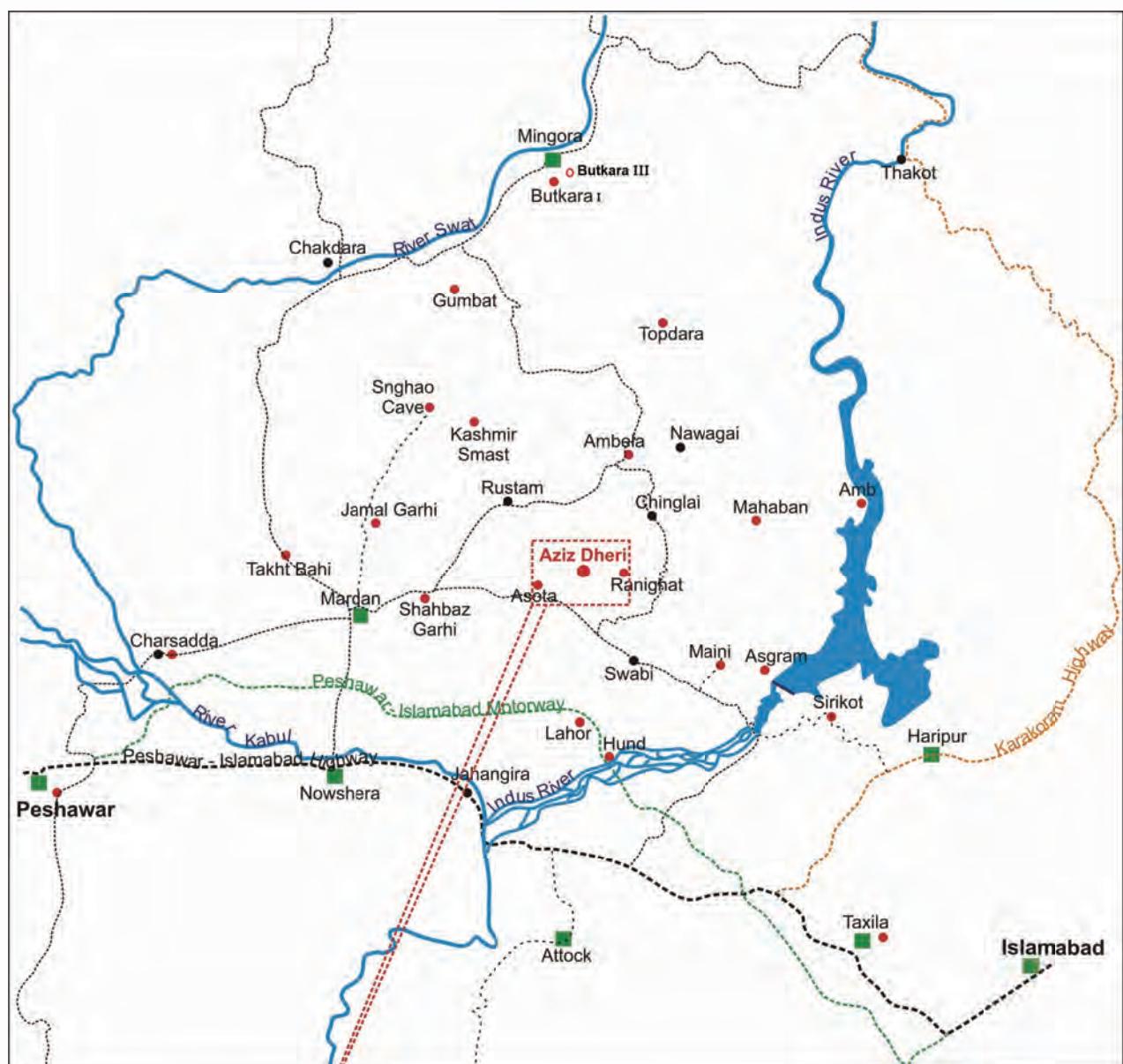


PLATE 8

Fig. 2. Location of the stūpas at Aziz Dheri

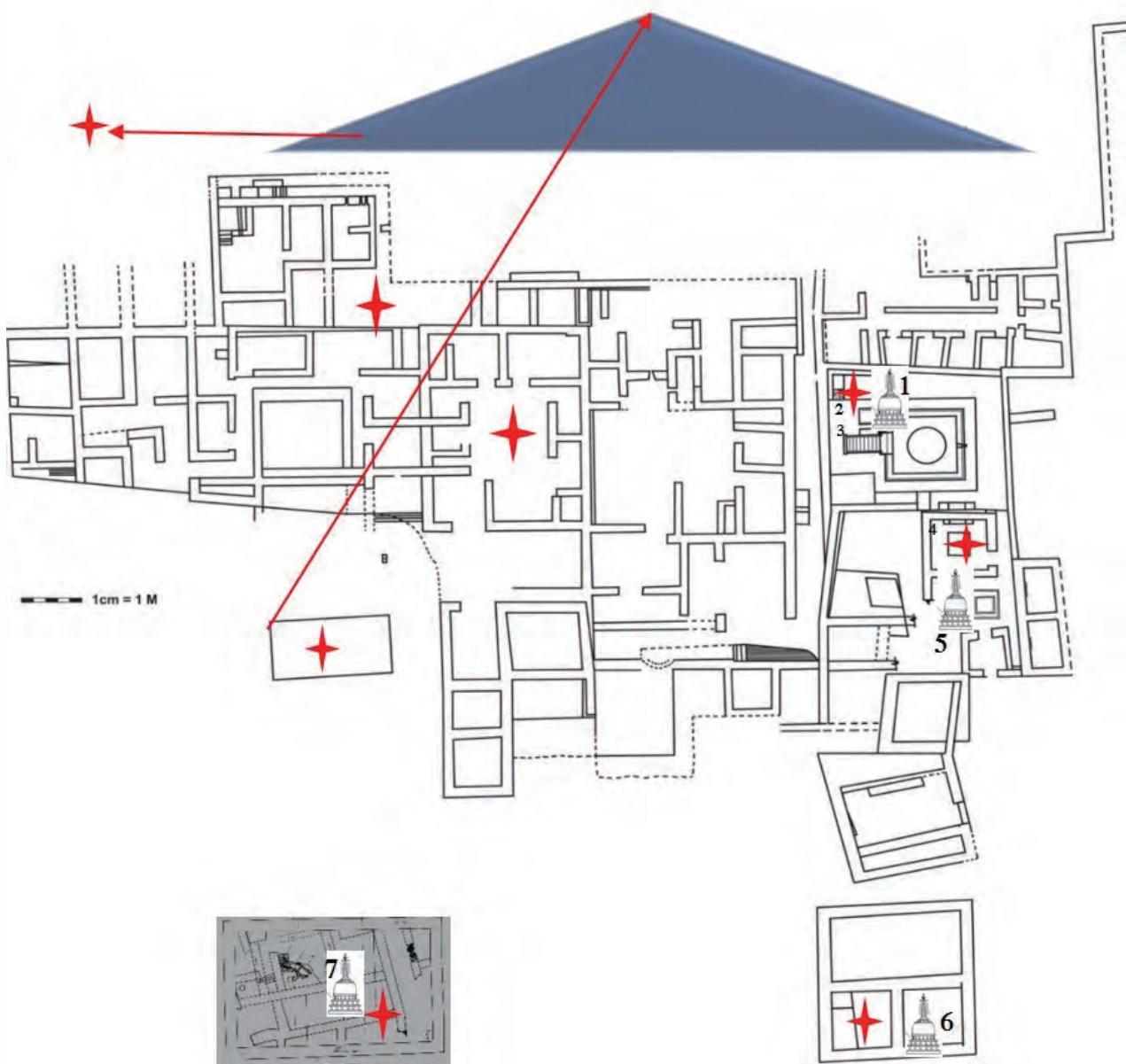


Fig. 3. Stūpa 1, excavation in 1993, dome with a seated figure of Buddha



Fig. 3a. details of the figure of stūpa 1

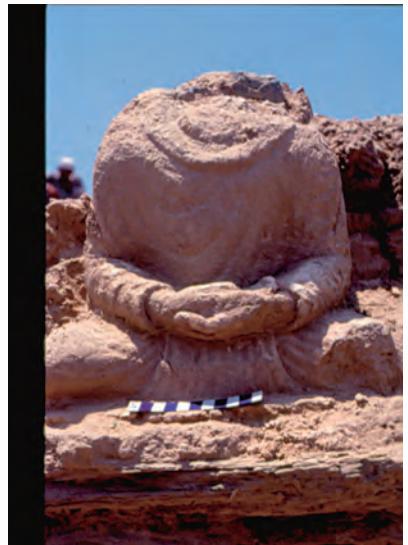


Fig. 4: Aziz Dheri, Stūpa 1 with stair riser relief panels (Photo 1993)



PLATE 10

Fig. 5: Stūpa 1, panels from stairs 8-10 (photo 1993).



Fig. 6a-c: Stūpa 1, Stair riser 1 (Photo 1993)

a

b

c

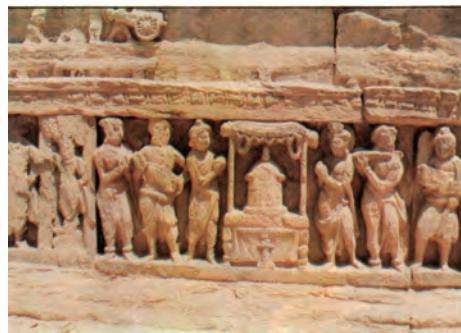


Fig. 7: Detail of Fig. 6a



Fig. 8: Possible original positions of the stair riser relief panels from Stūpa 1

Step No. 11



Step No. 10; length: 27.5cm



Step No. 9; length: 61.2(?)cm



Step No. 8; length: 25(?)cm

Step No. 7

Step No. 6

Step No. 5

Step No. 4

Total length: 161.7cm



3.3 (38.5x18.6cm)

Step No. 3



3.2 (75.2x17.5cm)



3.1 (48x17.2cm)

Total length: 171 cm



2.3 (51.2x17.8cm)

Step No. 2



2.2 (47.2x17cm)



2.1 (72.6x18.5cm)

Total length: 256.8cm



Step No. 1



36x19cm



7.8x20.6cm



37x19cm



38x19cm



21x20.5cm



27.5x19.5cm

PLATE 12

Fig. 9: Panels from Stair riser 1

1.1



1.2



1.3



1.4



(Fig. 9: Panels from Stair riser 1)

1.5

1.6



1.7



1.8

1.9



PLATE 14

Fig. 10: Panels from Stair riser 2
2.1



2.2



2.3



Fig. 11: Panels from Stair riser 3
3.1



3.2



3.3



PLATE 16

Fig. 12: Panel from Stair riser 8



Fig. 13: Panel from Stair riser 9



Fig. 14: Panel from Stair riser 10

